MUTINY!

A MILITANT MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM AN ANARCHIST-COMMUNIST PERSPECTIVE

MAY 21

May Day is a Day of Action!

The spirit of May Day is the spirit of Rebellion - this year Willow Grove, next year all of Sydney!

May Day has become the labour movement's traditional holiday. It's the annual fair for leftists and unionists: a day to wave the banner, shout slogans, give a stirring speech or two, a quick historical lecture, and then go home after the sausage sizzle in the park. To ask a blunt question – is this it?

In the past few years, some have attempted to regenerate the spirit of a combative May Day by bringing unions out on strike on the 1st of May itself, instead of waiting for the fun-fair on the weekend. This movement managed to attract some of the more militant and left-wing unionists, as well as student climate strikers. Last year, the movement was forced to carry out a car convoy because of lock-down restrictions, but this year it's been undone by the Gregorian calendar: May 1 falls on a weekend.

We know unionism is about more than a day off. The current campaign to stop the demolition of the Willow Grove historical site in Parramatta justifiably reminds people of the previous Green Ban movement of the 70s, but the message here is not just that workers should give a shit about the environment, or cultural heritage – that stuff is obvious, and for the most part workers already recognise it – but that workers need to build the confidence, unity and strength required to take action themselves.

The New South Wales division of the 1970s Builders Labourers Federation (BLF) was animated by class unionism, at the base. They rotated leadership positions to prevent energy being sucked away from the rank-and-file. Union officials were paid the average wage of the industry. There was a deliberate effort to mobilise migrant workers, providing translators at their regular meetings and translated material in general. After years of fostering a culture of militancy through regular and dynamic strikes, the workers managed to build the confidence in themselves to go beyond the traditional, conservatism unionism and embrace something radical. Workers demanded to get a say over what they produced, and what impact it would have on their lives and families, and fought with their industrial power to change the world. In an era when capitalist-induced climate change threatens to destroy the planet, this aspiration has never been more timely - now more than ever we need to demand, on May Day and beyond, that our labour isn't used to destroy our future.

The union movement in this country is not in such a state of weakness compared to what it used to be simply because the bosses have gotten more vicious, or because the wrong people are in government. Our answers won't come with the election of a new Labor government, and neither will they come through simply finding new union leaders. The strategy of shaking hands with the bosses and the government - whoever is in power - has only led to our conditions, rights, and power being whittled away bit by bit, with no fundamental change to our everyday lives. The only answer, as difficult as it is for some to swallow, is to focus all our efforts on cultivating working-class militancy – we want workers organising themselves and taking direct action to improve their conditions at work and in society to become the norm, not the exception.

The only way to defend the right to strike, our greatest weapon against the bosses and government, is to actually strike. This lesson is old; it was taught to us by the original 19th century May Day rebels in the United States, who struck for the eight-hour, five-day working week. When eight of their leaders – anarchists prominent among them – were strung up by the state on bogus charges of conspiracy, an unprecedented international campaign of solidarity was launched. The labour movement still fights for their fundamental demands - for the right of workers to decide their own fate for themselves - so let us learn from their strategies and prepare to fight and strike for our future.

MUTINY!
SYDNEY

No Parliamentary Road to Climate Justice!

Climate Action isn't enough - we demand Climate Justice, and that can only be won through working class struggle.

This May will be a big month for the climate movement. Not only will thousands of students go on strike on the 21st demanding climate action, but May Day will see an historic action in support of the 'green ban' on the Willow Grove site in Parramatta, put in place by the CFMEU and supported by other unions. But where

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SAVE THE ENVIRONMENT

should the climate movement go after May - and how are we going to win our radical demands for climate justice and a just transition for workers?

As international concern for climate change continues to increase and the scales of the market tip further towards renewable energy, it's clear that the question is not if we shift to renewable energy, but when, how fast, and in whose interests this shift will be. Coal and gas are dying industries, and renewable energy will soon replace it, but preventing a climate crisis won't simply involve moving to renewable energy; it demands the fundamental restructuring of our economic, political, and social systems that currently abuse our environment as a source of profit. Renewable energy will mean little if our forests and wildlife disappear in the process, or if we continue to ignore the land rights of Indigenous peoples, on whose land this infrastructure will be built. Uncontrolled climate change will also wreak untold havoc on our environment and workers alike: cleaners, teachers, builders, nurses, firefighters and other workers will all be forced onto the frontlines of a growing environmental crisis, with their wages and conditions cut to pay for the damage while the rich shelter in climate controlled homes and offices. That is why we call for climate justice, not simply climate action, and why the ruling class has worked for decades to try and cleave the climate and worker's movements apart. Without the united strength and revolutionary vision of organised, radical, democratic workers' unions, simply shifting to renewable energy will not create a sustainable future for anyone.

How do we, as workers, students, and communities, make sure that these imminent changes to the energy system are in our interests, and not just the interests of bosses and businesses? For decades people have placed their hope in a legislative path to climate justice by voting for or lobbying sympathetic MPs, but this strategy fails to see that the interests of those in parliament are inherently different to those of the working class. The parliamentary system exists specifically to suppress and mediate conflict between workers and capitalists to the benefit of the capitalist class. Both Labor and Liberal are bound to the interests of the fossil fuel bosses and the capitalist class as a whole, not only as most are of this class themselves, but because capitalists use their wealth and influence within and without the parties to prevent changes against their interests.

This is why the Labor party's recent annual conference included only meagre references to renewables, and backed the subsidisation and expansion of the dying coal industry beyond 2050. Despite consistent argument that fighting in parliament is the most 'realistic' way to achieve political power in the current context, it is entirely unrealistic to hope that either of the major political parties will suddenly abandon their long-held commitment to neoliberalism and work against the rich and powerful people that allow them to stay in power.

Social democratic forces like the Greens certainly offer a supportable alternative, but our support must be critical and conscious. Although the class character of the Greens is quite different to Labor or Liberal, simply supporting their parliamentary push will eventually reach a dead end. To achieve change through purely legislative means would mean that the Greens would need to form an opportunistic alliance with Labor (and thereby sacrifice their principles and credibility as a party of resistance) or they would need to capitulate to the interests of the capitalist class, who already work to suppress even the most meagre of their reforms.

Fundamentally though, legislative strategies fail because the parliament does not respond to the threat of votes, it responds to the threat of revolt: protest in the street and strikes in our workplaces. This is why we need direct action to realise our goal of climate justice, by demanding, striking, and organising ourselves, rather than waiting for the go-ahead from parliament or our union bureaucrats. The May 21 Climate Strike is a start, but now is the time to begin organising ourselves as workers and not just students, individuals, or party members. Unless we want ourselves to continue to be subservient to and reliant upon those who are deemed our 'leaders', we must begin agitating for a general strike for climate in the May Days to come.

We cannot afford to sit and wait while the ruling class flip to a renewable energy system at the last minute, pillaging the land, closing down fossil fuel energy production without a just transition for workers, and creating a renewable energy system that will merely give more power and influence to the rich. The strike is the ultimate tool of the working class, and it is the only tool that will successfully win and defend the goals of the climate justice movement.

There is much work to be done to realise this goal, which is exactly why we must not be distracted by politicians who would seek to dictate our own interests to us, but begin immediately the hard work of organising with our fellow workers!

The Government's War on Public Housing

The government and developers are playing with people's lives for profit - we must band together and support local communities who are fighting back!

Homelessness and at-risk homelessness have never been satisfactorily addressed in Australia. Looking over trends from 2009-2019, there has consistently been over 15,000 households per annum identified as the greatest needs households (currently homeless or at-risk) for public housing.

Despite these staggering figures, the NSW Government has been working with private developers to offload public housing in "premium suburbs" under the premise of upgrades. With each "upgrade", the current dwellers are subjected to eviction and further displacement, significantly decreasing public housing availability overall.

The Government's "Communities Plus" initiative plans to demolish public housing, with thriving suburbs such as Waterloo and Redfern listed as "major projects". The plan is to demolish and rebuild them as a combination of private and public housing. However, the new dwellings - while increasing in size and liveability - do little to increase the accommodation for public housing. Under this initiative, the new developments are now "integrated housing", 70% of which are reserved for private profit.

This isn't the first time the needs of the working class, poor, disabled and elderly are continually being disregarded, discarded, and traded for profit.

In 2019, there was a contentious campaign to save the Sirius building in The Rocks by trying to get it heritage listed. Ultimately the campaign failed and the Government sold the historical building for $150 million, the sum of which was "promised" to provide housing for 630 people. In Waterloo, the current proposal is a development of around 3,000 new properties but only 30 percent of which will be social housing.

There have been promises by the NSW Government to create new public housing to replace the ones they are selling off during this housing bubble for profit. These promises are often "future projects" to be carried out after evicting the current dwellers and taking years to replace (if they are replaced). If the Government was seriously thinking of the needs of public housing dwellers, they would stop evictions of current dwellers for profit and instead build public housing until homelessness was eliminated.

There have been many recent campaigns and rallies organised by community groups such as Hands Off Glebe and Friends of Erskineville to save public housing in Glebe and Eveleigh. The goal of these community action groups is to save public housing from being demolished and the community from being evicted, but there is space to push for even more.

Recently the campaign in Glebe achieved a commitment from the NSW government to deliver 100% new social housing when Cowper Street and Wentworth Park Road are redeveloped. Whilst this demonstrates the power of community organising and is a move in a better direction than the usual "Communities Plus" 70-30% mix, this redevelopment will still displace those that live within the current public housing on the street and will cement a further change from public housing to social housing, adding in an extra layer of bureaucracy from the not-for-profit sector.

"Save Our Homes" banner displayed on Franklin St., from the Hands Off Glebe Facebook page.

Public housing advocates in Glebe will hopefully take this development as evidence that their organising is effective and continue to push for public housing explicitly. The rollback of "integrated housing" whilst significant as it minimises the public-use of new developments, is not enough.

Across Greater Sydney, there are additional projects to demolish public housing in growing suburbs such as Arncliffe, Villawood, Riverwood, Telopea, and Ivanhoe (Macquarie Park).

It's imperative that these action groups continue to connect and work together to build a stronger movement against the privatisation of housing.

In 2011, it was estimated that up to 90,000 homes are sitting empty in NSW. Research found that properties in neighbourhoods with lower rental yields and higher expected capital gains were more likely to be unoccupied. This includes "premium" suburbs such as Haymarket and The Rocks, where one in seven dwellings was vacant. Other suburbs were across Lower North Shore and the Inner-City. These suburbs all had vacancy levels above 13 per cent. These neighbourhoods, together with central Sydney, account for nearly 7,200 empty homes. These homes sat empty due to property investors focused on growing value on these properties. The government's tax incentives have further encouraged accumulation and artificially produced scarcity, leading to the sharp decrease of affordability for housing.

This is a battle to prevent more homelessness, insecure housing, and to tell the NSW Government to fuck off with terrorising people for the sake of lining their pockets.

The systematic decline in public housing is situated within the wider neo-liberal trend to attack the concept of public goods. This logic puts private profit over anything else, whilst displacing existing communities. Public housing is transformed from being a home, a place to live a life, to an exchange with a land-lord, the threat of eviction ever present.

MUTINY! SYDNEY

Deaths in custody: the sharp edge of the sword

With seven Black deaths in custody since the start of March, it's clear there's no accident: just murder.

On the 27th of April, a thirty-seven year old Indigenous man was found dead in his cell at Cessnock Correctional Centre. Just a day earlier another Indigenous man had died in his cell at Port Phillip Prison. These two deaths bring the total number of Indigenous deaths in custody to be seven since the beginning of March.

These deaths are not isolated incidents. It's not simply "natural causes", or the result of moral failings on the part of the dead, or on the presence of bad apples in the police and prison services. Rather, they are a manifestation of the fundamental oppression of Indigenous people by capital.

From the beginning of the colonisation of Australia, the British forces of "law and order", hungry for new sources of profit, waged a campaign of extermination against the native inhabitants of the land – the people resisting their incursions. It was not simply directed at individual Indigenous lives, but Indigenous societies generally: unique languages, customs, family structures, spiritual beliefs and communal economies were attacked. They instead enforced the English language, the British system of law, the nuclear family, the Christian religion, and – above all – the holy institution of private property. These attacks were carried out by everyone from militiamen, squatters, "native police" and priests in the early days, and are carried out by regular policemen, teachers,

magistrates and social workers in the 20th and 21st centuries.

The result of these brutal policies is the relegation of Indigenous Australians to the bottom of Australian society. Indigenous poverty rates are substantially higher than they are among the wider Australian population, as are the social ills that flow from it: drug addictions, the violent breakdown of relationships, family neglect, suicides, and poor physical health. Repression, directly by the police and indirectly by social and economic exclusion, continues in order to suppress calls for justice and the organisation of Indiginous people against the extraction of profit from traditional lands. The cops are the but sharp edge of the sword.

In 2014, Ms. Dhu was arrested by Western Australian police and taken into custody for an infraction as minor as the non-payment of fines, fines that were incurred when she was still a teenager. Placed in a cell, she cried, vomited, and desperately pleaded for help. The police ignored her, calling her hysterical, a junkie that was full of shit. In the end she died of a heart attack, caused by an infection that resulted from a beating given to her by a violent partner. Even as nurses attempted to resuscitate her, a constable told them that she was she was faking it. How much evidence do we need to give to prove that this is not a system of justice, but a system of death?

We know three things for certain:The only way to end indigenous deaths in custody is to end colonialism. The only way to end colonialism is to end capitalism, and the only way to end capitalism is through social revolution.

As militants, it's our job to fight to that end and give our support to the working-class struggles that put this rotten system to the sword. The fight for Indigenous freedom and working-class freedom must be joined at the hip. We don't need prisons. We need liberty.

Black Flag Sydney

Mutiny is published by Black Flag Sydney, an anarcho-communist organisation in Sydney. We aim to build the power of working class movements against capitalism, and to provide an analysis of capitalism and the state that grows the force of revolutionary anarchist ideas in Sydney, with the goal of stateless communism. We acknowledge that we operate on is unceded Aboriginal land, and that the struggle for First Nation's sovereignty is the struggle for the liberation of the entire working class.

BLACK FLAG SYDNEY

Upcoming Events

Our sister group, Sydney Anarcho-Communists, runs an open fortnightly reading group on Wednesday's at 6pm, at 6 Gerald St Marrickville - for all those interested in discussing and learning about anarchist and communist ideas.

For any enquiries about this newsletter, please email contact@blackflagsydney.com

Sydney Anarcho-Communists

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SYDNEY ANARCHO-COMMUNISTS

5th May	Anarchism and the Climate Crisis
19th May	Anarchism and Secondary Education
2nd June	Multiculturalism and the Working Class